

## THE FINNISH NGO FOUNDATION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, KIOS

### ANNUAL REPORT 2013 – SUMMARY

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

The Finnish NGO Foundation for Human Rights (KIOS) was established in September 1998 by eleven Finnish non-governmental organisations working with human rights and development issues. KIOS provides financial support for projects of local civil society organisations that work to promote or protect human rights in developing countries. The overall goal of KIOS is to promote human rights in developing countries as they are defined in the treaties and instruments of the United Nations and in other equivalent regional human rights instruments.

According to the strategy for the years 2011–2015 the geographic focus areas of KIOS are Eastern Africa and South Asia. In Eastern Africa KIOS funding focuses on:

- Burundi
- Democratic Republic of the Congo (the Kivus)
- Ethiopia
- Kenya
- Rwanda and
- Uganda.

In South Asia the funding focuses on:

- Afghanistan
- Bangladesh
- Nepal
- Pakistan
- Sri Lanka and
- Tibet

In 2013, the country strategies for Afghanistan, Burundi, Nepal, Pakistan and Uganda were completed. Country strategies aim to make the works of KIOS more effective and strategic.

Funding was granted to 31 projects, of which 14 (45%) were in focus countries in East-Africa and 17 (55%) in South Asia (14 in focus countries and 2 in India, 1 regional project in Asia). The funding for KIOS from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland was 1 700 000 €. The Board of KIOS discussed 201 project applications of which 30 was accepted. In the end of 2013 KIOS was funding 59 on-going projects.

KIOS, in cooperation with Amnesty, Finnish League for Human rights and Kepa, organized an international seminar titled *Promoting Human Rights – Human rights Defenders as actors of Social Change* on 18.-19.9.2013 (see more on chapter 4). During 2013 the challenges human rights defenders face in their work were highlighted, as many partners of KIOS were harassed in various ways.

## **2. PROJECT FUNDING**

### **2.1 Appraisals and funding**

Through carefully looking over the appraisals of each application, KIOS wanted to ensure the success and effectiveness of the supported projects, as well as guarantee an equal and open appraisal for all applicants. KIOS put special emphasis on the reliability, expertise and previous experience of the applicant organisation.

Potential projects are also evaluated in terms of the strategy and country strategies. Projects are seen as a part of a wider strategy, which aims in promoting human rights. As the human rights contexts are different in each of the focus countries, the country strategies also vary. However, KIOS is aiming to authentic local ownerships of the partners to their projects, and therefore all the applications are considered thoroughly.

### **2.2 Approved projects**

KIOS registered altogether 315 applications (192 in 2012) in 2013. The amount of the applications increased which might be a result of worsening human rights situation and better awareness about KIOS in the focus countries. The executive Board of KIOS discussed 201 project applications, out of which 30 (36 in 2012) were approved. Around 15 % (16 % in 2012) of the applications were approved.

The average amount of funding per project has varied in the past years. In 2013 the average funding for a project was around 37 800 € (40 500 in 2012). Altogether, 1 188 900 € was allocated to project funding in 2013 (1 457 900 in 2012).

The Executive Board had set objectives for the distribution of funding according to the geographic focus areas. 18 of the approved projects were from the African focus areas, 16 from Asian focus areas and 2 projects were regional Asian projects.

A great number of the projects receiving a positive funding decision aimed at prevention of human rights violations through awareness raising, training and lobbying, or provided legal aid for victims of human rights violations. In addition, the institutional capacity building of some organizations was supported. More emphasis was drawn also to the emerging challenges of human rights defenders such as security threats.

### **2.3 On-going projects at the end of 2012**

At the end of 2013 KIOS had 59 on-going projects in 13 countries. The countries with the largest number of on-going projects were Kenya (10 projects), Uganda (7 projects), Bangladesh (6) and Pakistan (6).

## 2.4 Monitoring

In addition to formal reporting periods, KIOS stays in close contact with the organizations throughout the project period and gives them, for example, information and training. Monitoring trips are also a crucial part of monitoring the projects and evaluating new applicants. In 2013, KIOS staff made monitoring visits to Burundi, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Sri Lanka and Uganda.

## 2.5 Partnership programmes

Adequate resources, networking and impact of partner organisations are part of the vision of KIOS. The first *KIOS – Youth Alive! Kenya Partnership Programme* started in Kenya in 2008. The core idea of the programme was to offer capacity building for small organisations. The small organizations' need for closer project monitoring and guidance was also acknowledged. The aim is to increase the capacity of small human rights organisations through enabling wider networking, and ultimately also to strengthen the Kenyan human rights movement. In 2013, the third phase of this project continued.

The partnership programme started in 2011 with ACODEV is also based on the idea of building the capacity of small NGOs. The programme was granted additional funding in 2012 and the project was completed in 2013, while a continuation project was also agreed on. In addition, a partnership programme with Odhikar, focusing on women human rights defenders was started in 2013.

## 3. HUMAN RIGHTS WORK AND ITS CHALLENGES IN KIOS FOCUS COUNTRIES

The human rights work is challenging and even risky in all the focus countries of KIOS. Therefore, KIOS seeks to develop more strategic ways to work in these areas and increase closer cooperation with the local organizations in order to achieve effective outcomes. KIOS has aimed to support its partners also through advocacy work, in cases where human rights defenders are threatened or harassed.

This overview highlights developments in the situation of human rights in the focus countries in 2013. It does not aim to be comprehensive, but to illustrate some of the main trends as emerged from the work of KIOS.

### Afghanistan

The security situation in Afghanistan is still very fragile. Lack of proper judicial system complicates human rights work significantly in the country. The situation concerning Afghan women's rights has not made progress despite of the fact that it has been a major target in the development strategy of Afghanistan. The projects KIOS is funding in Afghanistan concentrate on legal aid offered for women and raising awareness on women's rights among women themselves. Shuhada is a long-term partner of KIOS in Afghanistan. The country strategy for Afghanistan was completed in April 2013. The monitoring visits require significant security measures, which is challenge for KIOS.

## Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, the human rights record worsened during 2013. The current government has aimed in controlling the action of the opposition as the election in 2014 is getting closer. Freedom of expression and assembly has been limited significantly. In addition, illegal arrests and abuse of the human rights defenders and trade union activists, enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings and torture are common. There are many problems in the field of women's rights and rights of minorities and other vulnerable groups.

KIOS has worked closely with a well-known local human rights organisation, Odhikar. During 2013, also Odhikar was targeted and harassed severely by the regime. As a bright side, the situation of gender minorities were improved in the legislation. The support of KIOS focused on human rights defenders and women's, Dalits' and gender minorities' rights as well as on work against trafficking.

## Nepal

Nepal is a post-conflict society that is aiming to build peace and democracy through building a new constitution for the country. The process has faced various political deadlocks, and in 2013, an election was arranged to set a new committee to complete the process. Despite the political deadlocks, Nepal is developing its democracy and part of the interim national legislation conform international human rights norms.

However, the implementation of the legislation in poor, multicultural emerging democracy is challenging. Ethnic minorities, indigenous people, sexual minorities, people with disabilities and other minorities are often marginalized.

The country strategy for Nepal was completed in 2013 and the focus of KIOS funding was on human rights defenders and women's rights, rights of disabled and awareness raising on economic, social and cultural rights.

## Pakistan

The year 2013 in Pakistan was violent. Political instability, radicalization and lack of security are reflected directly on the human rights situation in the country. Human rights defenders have faced constant harassment, even direct violence. Many human rights organizations, especially in Khyber Pakhtunkwa have been forced to modify or end their activities. The programme coordinator of Blue Veins, Qamar Naseem, participated in the KIOS seminar in Helsinki.

In 2013, Pakistan saw elections where power was transferred from a government to another democratically. However, the election period was violent. In addition, environmental catastrophes engendered millions of displaced persons in the country during 2013.

Illegal arrests, disappearances, torture, political and religious violence, and violence against minorities and women are most severe human rights issues in the country. The support of KIOS was focused on women's and children's rights. The country strategy was completed in 2013.

## **Sri Lanka**

Authoritarian government and corrupted judicial system are the main threats to the human rights defenders and organizations in Sri Lanka. The Sri Lankan government continued its assault on democratic space and targeted civil society through threats, surveillance, and clampdowns on activities and free speech. The presence of the security forces especially in the eastern and northern parts of the country is still strong.

In March 2013, the UN Human Rights Committee demanded Sri Lanka to implement the recommendations made by the national Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission. Despite the international pressure, Sri Lanka has not taken significant actions to investigate the human rights violations of the civil war. KIOS support focused on the rights of women, the internally displaced persons, political prisoners, and on human rights monitoring.

## **Tibet**

China has tightened its control over Tibet and restricted further Tibetans' fundamental and human rights. International support to Tibet has faded because Western and neighbouring countries have become more cautious to criticize or act against China. Independent media and human rights observers are prohibited to enter Tibet, which makes it difficult to get any verified information on human rights situation in the area. As China has increased its pressure on neighbouring countries, the conditions of Tibetans in Nepal has also worsened.

KIOS has not had an opportunity to fund any projects in Tibet but it has funded Tibetan organisations in exile. The aim of funding has been, for example, improving the rights of women in the refugee communities. A country strategy for Tibet was completed in December 2011. The next monitoring visit to Dharamsala will be realized in spring 2014.

## **Burundi**

In 2013, Burundi was reviewed in the Universal periodic review of the UN Human Rights Committee. The recommendations dealt with strengthening the implementation of already ratified conventions, strengthening the judicial system, women's rights, and human rights defenders. The recommendations also condemned the severe violations of civil and political rights, as well as the access of the UN special rapporteurs to Burundi.

During 2013, Burundi has introduced various law bills, as the election in 2015 is getting closer. Many of the bills, such as the amendment to the constitution, media bill, NGO bill and a bill concerning the right to free assembly, are significant threats to the human rights situation of the country. In 2013, the focus of KIOS support has been on women's rights, indigenous peoples' rights, prisoners' rights, and the rights of Batwas. In addition KIOS supported a project of the East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project, which had activities also in Burundi. A country strategy was completed in 2013.

## **Ethiopia**

The economic growth in Ethiopia has been rapid in recent years, and the country has achieved some of the Millennium Development Goals. However, this achievement is shadowed by a very poor record in human rights. Ethiopian organisations are not able to work for political and civil rights because the government has prevented their activities in different ways. The freedom of press was suppressed even more during 2013.

The changing of the prime minister after 2012 has had some minor positive impacts on the discourse on human rights, but in reality, freedom of opinion and the state of the civil society has not seen any improvements. Human rights organizations are often harassed and the 2009 law bill restricting foreign funding has affected the human rights field tremendously. KIOS has funded mostly projects focusing on economic and social rights and rights of women. A monitoring visit was made in November 2013. The country strategy has been completed in 2012.

## **Kenya**

Despite of quite advanced new constitution (approved in 2010), Kenya continues to face serious challenges with implementing judicial and policy reforms. In addition, impunity for serious crimes by public officials and security forces, such as extrajudicial killings and torture, or the 2007 post-election violence is still a major challenge. After the presidential election in 2013 the human rights record has worsened. The civil society has been harassed increasingly.

KIOS has supported projects focusing on land rights, children's rights, and rights of the LGBTI. Various projects involve activities aimed at increasing awareness about the new constitution of Kenya. The next monitoring visit to Kenya is planned for March 2014.

## **The Kivus (Democratic Republic of the Congo)**

The security and human rights situation in the Kivus is still in 2013 very fragile. Since 2012, M23 rebels launched an offensive with support from the Rwandan military and took control of Goma, the provincial capital, and the town of Sake. M23 fighters were responsible for widespread war crimes, including summary executions, rapes, and child recruitment. Also other armed groups and the army have perpetrated serious human rights violations. In 2013, 11 African nations signed a peace treaty regarding the situation and UN Special Forces started their operation to end the operations of M23.

In 2013, many war crime perpetrators have been brought to court, however, human rights violations continue to be widespread. As many funders concentrate on work against sexual violence, KIOS has funded projects focusing on monitoring of human rights violations, supporting the rights of indigenous Batwas, and promoting the rights of children born due to sexual violence. KIOS was unable to visit the Kivus in 2013 due to the security situation. The country strategy was completed in 2011.

## Rwanda

The economic, social and cultural rights in Rwanda are realized better than in many of the neighbouring countries. However, the government has continued to impose tight restrictions on freedom of expression and association. Opposition parties are unable to operate, and independent civil society organisations remained weak due to years of state intimidation. Few Rwandan organisations publicly denounce human rights violations.

In 2013, the regime continued to tighten its control over independent human rights organizations. The regime strongly influenced the changing of the board members of LIPRODHOR in July, which forced KIOS to interrupt the started project with the organization. KIOS has, however, been able to fund human rights work in Rwanda, and the projects have focused on labour rights, access to justice, rights of ethnic minority Batwas, and strengthening the mediation committees, Abunzis. The country strategy was completed in 2013 and a monitoring visit was realized in May 2013.

## Uganda

Freedom of expression, assembly and association are increasingly limited in Uganda. The Public Order Management Act, approved in autumn 2013, is continuing this trend. Especially NGOs that have been vocal on land rights, oil resources, corruption and public expenditure, are often harassed. The long pending act on homosexuality was, however, not signed by the president.

Even though, the legislation is to some extent progressive, the protection of economic, social and cultural rights are not adequately enforced. KIOS supports two projects focusing on advocacy on economic, social and cultural rights, as well as funding projects focusing on children's rights, women's rights, LGBTI-rights and capacity building of small organizations.

## 4. COMMUNICATIONS AND NETWORKING

The communications of KIOS focus on two areas: the human rights organizations in the South, and the Finnish civil society. In the South, the main target groups are potential applicants, current partners and other actors in the human rights field, especially in the focus countries. The aim was to make KIOS more known among the civil society of focus countries and to enhance networking. In reaching the target groups of KIOS, the website ([www.kios.fi](http://www.kios.fi)) is the primary channel. On the website, KIOS gives information in English, French, Spanish and Finnish. KIOS published news about approved projects, changes to application guides, monitoring visits and shared newsletters of partners, and communicated about the results of its work. In May, KIOS presented its work at the World Village –festival. The brochures were finalized in Finnish and English in the beginning of 2013.

KIOS, in cooperation with Amnesty, Finnish League for Human Rights and Kepa, organized an international seminar titled *Promoting Human Rights – Human rights Defenders as actors of Social Change* on 18.-19.9.2013. Seminar speakers included President Tarja Halonen, Hina Jilani and Hassan Shire. In 23th September, a smaller seminar was also organized focusing on the rights of disabled people in Nepal. The keynote speaker was Nepalese Krishna Gautam.

A seminar report was published in cooperation with the human rights group of Finnish Parliament on the International Human Rights Day, 10<sup>th</sup> December 2013. In the event, Minister of Development Pekka Haavisto and MP Elisabeth Nauclér gave their presentations.

## **5. QUALITY MANAGEMENT**

The board of KIOS approved a document regarding the quality management in May, and a workshop on the topic was arranged previously. KIOS continues to develop its monitoring and evaluation methods. KIOS has also participated in the quality management working group aimed to NGOs that are receiving funding from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland.

Impact assessment is challenging in human rights work and focus should be targeted to results, and in addition, to how well the project is matching with strategic goals. The country strategies are aimed to increase contextual knowledge aiming in more strategic work.

## **6 NETWORKING AND WORK IN FINLAND**

### **6.1 Networks**

Networking with human rights and development actors is a part of the daily work of KIOS. Networking is also central in monitoring visits. During 2013, Elina Vuola maintained the cooperation with EurAc. Ulla Anttila and Yacine Mbaye attended the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary seminar of Norwegian Human Rights Fund. KIOS and NHRF also maintained networks with the Swedish Amnesty Fund.

### **6.2 Work in Finland**

The work of KIOS in Finland concentrated on communications and networking, aiming at informing the civil society actors and wider audience about the work of KIOS and the human rights situation in the developing countries. The main target groups in Finland were the founder organisations of KIOS, and authorities and other professionals of the development cooperation field. Also for Finnish contacts, the KIOS website was the most important means of communication. Since 2012, representatives of KIOS have also participated in the Advisory Board on International Human Rights, set by the Foreign Ministry of Finland. The advisory board is a central forum for the advocacy work of KIOS.

### **6.3. Cooperation between the foundations**

KIOS collaborated closely with its two sister foundations: Abilis Foundation, which supports projects empowering disabled persons in developing countries, and Siemenpuu Foundation, which supports environmental projects in developing countries. All three foundations benefited from the cooperation in terms of developing common practices of administration, participating in happenings and meetings together, as well as sharing office spaces together with Finnish Disabled People's International Development Association.

## 7. ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF

Each founder organisation of KIOS appoints one representative to the Executive Board. In 2013, the Executive Board held 6 meetings and in addition 3 e-mail meetings. In November, the board held a seminar, reflecting on the forthcoming strategy for the period 2016-2020.

The Annual Meeting was held on the 11th of April. The Chairperson of the Executive Board was Mr. Timo Lappalainen from Kepa and the Vice Chairperson Mr. Kim Remitz from the Finnish Refugee Council.

### The Executive Board of KIOS in 2013

Founder Organization	Member	Deputy Member
Amnesty International, Finnish Section	Tuomas Laine	Frank Johansson
Finnish League for Human Rights	Reetta Toivanen	Päivi Mattila
Kepa	Timo Lappalainen	Outi Hannula
Finn Church Aid	Eva-Marita Rinne-Koistinen	Piritta Rikkonen
Finnish Refugee Council	Kim Remitz	Juha Klemola
Finnish Peace Committee	Teemu Matinpuro	Karim Maiche
Committee of 100 in Finland	Anna Kotaviita	Eekku Aromaa
The Finnish UN Association	Heikki Pietilä	Helena Laukko
UNICEF Finland	Annika Launiala	Inka Hetemäki
UN Women Finland	Henna Hakkarainen	Elina Multanen
Finnish Disabled People's International Development Association	Timo Kuoppala	Anja Malm

In 2013 KIOS had a permanent staff of six: an executive director, four coordinators and an administrative secretary. Also part-time personnel and interns worked at the office during the year.

## 7. FINANCES

According to the agreement between the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland and KIOS, the new funding received for the year 2013 was 1 700,000 €. In addition 181 272 € was transferred from the previous year. KIOS made new allocations of 1 226 972 € for human rights projects. Project administration costs in 2013 were 338 597 € and the general administration costs 136 133 €.